

if that is a proposal we ought to consider.

Mr. REID. Of course, we should consider it.

I say through the Chair to my friend from Illinois, we are in this predicament because the Republicans have put us here. We are spending an inordinate amount of time on seeing if they can run up a debt of approximately \$1 trillion to the American people to take care of 8,100 people. That is why we are here. It is not because of the minimum wage; they hate the minimum wage. You know that, I know that. It is not because of the extenders. The extenders are good for most everybody. That is why they put it on the pension bill in conference. We are here because of the estate tax repeal. That is what this is all about. All the rest is fluff. As I say, the dominating issue of this Republican Senate has been estate tax repeal. That means more to them than spending time debating the war in Iraq. It means more to them than talking about health care.

It means more to them, certainly, than talking about global warming because, according to them, it doesn't exist. It certainly has taken away time to talk about why the President vetoed stem cell. This issue relating to the estate tax has taken care of everything for them. That is their No. 1 issue. You talk about the minimum wage being our No. 1 issue. They don't have No. 2, 3, 4, 5, like we do. Estate tax is it.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I will be very brief. Our agenda has been very clear. It has been clearly articulated and, as people look back, as they look forward, they will see how all the pieces come together because each time we take a bill to the floor there is a complaint. On child custody, there is obstruction; we are going to stop it. But it is clear to the American people. When we go back to our States and talk to the people, they get it. The Democratic leader is right in many ways. He says Iraq and dead Americans—the words he used—\$3 billion, all of which I look at as securing America's homeland and those enduring values of freedom and liberty that we know are so important to our generation and that next generation. That is what this war on terror is about. It is the No. 1 issue, securing America's homeland. I will come back to that in a second.

I hope we can address supporting our troops overseas in the Department of Defense appropriations bill, this week. We need to do that this week as well. We could go to that tonight. I will talk to Chairman STEVENS as soon as I finish here to see if we can take that to the floor tonight and address it over the next couple of days.

Securing America's homeland, we addressed in part through our border security bill, and addressing immigration, we did spend several weeks on the floor of the Senate.

The second thematic is securing America's prosperity. By prosperity, the other side wants to talk about rich people because they know it has connotations to it and the sound bites work. But if you look at what we are doing, we are talking about people at the lowest rung of the economic ladder. We are talking about small businesspeople. We are talking about people who feel the squeeze that we know they feel because of energy prices and because of health care. Although they can say we are not addressing those, at 5 o'clock today we are voting on the bill that can have the single greatest impact since our last Energy bill a year ago, which was very successful, a bill which has the potential for reducing that squeeze that people are feeling today when they fill their tractors with fuel. We are addressing it on this floor.

We addressed health information technology, which I think is the single most incremental variable that can transform health care today in terms of improved quality, improved availability, and reduced cost, by getting rid of the waste and the abuse and even the fraud and the medical errors that do typify our health care sector. We addressed that in the Senate. We passed it in the Senate, and the House passed it last week. Now we can go to conference and pass it. So when we talk prosperity, too often the other side just talks about rich people. We too often talk about the 5.4 million jobs created—very, very important—the 4.7 percent unemployment rate, the lowest of the average of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s—all very important. We are addressing what the average person, the typical taxpayer is feeling—energy prices—on the floor of the Senate today.

We are addressing health care costs through health information technology by trying to take small business health plans to the floor but having it stopped from consideration by the other side of the aisle. People feel those health care costs.

The third thematic is securing America's values. We have securing America's homeland, No. 1; securing prosperity, No. 2; and securing America's values, No. 3. Last week, on child custody protection, it is being stopped by the other side of the aisle. This body has spoken, but it is being obstructed. The Adam Walsh child protection bill, passed, signed by the President. We are going to continue to fight for America's values.

I will close by saying, there is a lot we will be talking about over the course of the week. I restate once again that vote will be Friday. Are we ready to address a permanent solution to the death tax this Friday? We are going to say yes or no. If it is no, we are not going to do it this year. Extension of tax relief, the issues and the policies that I outlined before, we are going to do them now, this week, or we are not going to do it, as well as the minimum

wage. Remember, if we pass it this week, or if we demonstrate that we are going to pass it this week, people across this country who are making the minimum wage will have that minimum wage go. It has already passed the House, from \$5.15 to \$7.25, a \$2.10 increase, if we vote correctly on this Friday.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I wanted to correct the RECORD. I spoke inaccurately in that on the issue of pay-go, there is available under pay-go approximately \$300 billion to cover the cost of this tax bill. In one 5-year period, it may be out of compliance, but over the entire 10-year period, it is clearly within compliance. I did want to make that clarification.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

GULF OF MEXICO ENERGY SECURITY ACT OF 2006

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 3711, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3711) to enhance the energy independence and security of the United States by providing for exploration, development, and production activities for mineral resources in the Gulf of Mexico, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Frist amendment No. 4713, to establish an effective date.

Frist amendment No. 4714 (to amendment No. 4713), to amend the effective date.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we just heard an interesting exchange between the Democratic and Republican leaders about the week's agenda. The Democratic leader indicated that this was a do-nothing Congress and in the same remarks he indicated he was going to try to keep us from doing something this week. As the occupant of the chair has frequently said, block and blame. But the truth is, it must be confusing for the people in the gallery and for those who might be watching on television to try to figure out in the middle of all this what is happening. Let me explain it again before addressing the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act, which is my principal reason for rising at this point.

This week, we are considering four bills, each of which enjoys bipartisan support: the Energy Security Act, which I will get back to in a minute, but also the Democratic version of the increase in the minimum wage, a tax extender bill that enjoys broad bipartisan support, and a modification and